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Who Is Nick Land?

He has been the most important name in Silicon Valley you've never heard of. But now the influential 'father of accelerationism' is finally in the spotlight.

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FEW THINKERS HAVE GENERATED MORE FASCINATION SINCE THE TURN of the century than Nick Land. Originally an anarchic academic at the University of Warwick, and later the leader of an avant-garde-theory cult organized around cyberpunk, cybernetics, mumbo jumbo and drugs, Land today is a living meme and an oracle, generating a singular mixture of caustic political commentary and oblique numerological ravings on his seminal X account from Shanghai.

Known as the “father of accelerationism” after his doctrine of hyperintelligent capitalism superseding humanity (a fate which he welcomes), in recent years Land has been linked with white nationalist terrorism by U.S. activist journalists, saluted by investor Marc Andreessen in his widely circulated Techno-Optimist Manifesto, and had his writing cross-examined for crimethink by a corrupt British barrister at the High Court in London.

I was in the witness box on that occasion, defending the legitimacy of reading Land in the latest iteration of the endless trial of philosophy. But Land's philosophical value also needs to be defended against Land himself, the image of

Land, and the spellbinding power of a dazzling discourse which captivates cyberspace as an account of itself.

For his devoted supporters, Land is a guru, albeit an ironic one: They follow him from platform to platform, repeat his epigrammatic formulations like mantras, build websites for his work, and write derivative imitations of his singular style. For his obsessive detractors, Land is a diabolical figure, to be silenced as a matter of urgency. For a third group, extending through Marc Andreessen to a network of “effective accelerationists” looking to turbocharge West Coast rationalism with something seductively thrilling, Land is the herald of a Faustian will-to-the-future which they believe belongs to them.

All these responses follow logically from Land’s own analysis. Understood as a phenomenon of cyberspace rather than its master thinker, Land is less the convener of an accelerationist doctrine and more a human accelerant, who has devised a new way of doing philosophy for an era of viral replication: philosophy as cybernetics, halfway between memes and speech.

“Land’s philosophy has become the source code
for a new kind of network spirituality”

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Across all his phases of activity, from his ’90s spell in academia, to his 2010s intervention into “Neo-Reactionary” politics, to his recent work on religion, Land’s concern has stayed consistent: to disclose “the outside” beyond conventional structures of thought and against the monotony of the eternal return of the same.

Already in his 1988 paper “Kant, Capital and the Prohibition of Incest,” Land was connecting the limitations of Kantianism to the structures of the colonialist system then coming online. Kant had secured the foundations of knowledge by installing an airlock between the world of phenomena and the great outside of the noumenon, about which nothing could be known for certain. Both Kant and capital, Land argued, torturously, artificially delimited otherness by submitting it to the “incestuous” uniformity of commodities under the reign of the Kantian tribunal of reason. “In the purity of categorical morality,” Land wrote, “the incestuous blood-line of the pharaohs is still detectable, but sublimated into an impersonal administration.” The task was to push “the incest prohibition to its limit” through a violent feminist “uprooting of the patriarchal endogamies that orchestrate the contemporary world order.”

All this was academic cliché, but by 1992 Land was evolving. The year marked the appearance of *The Thirst for Annihilation*, a monograph devoted to the writer Georges Bataille which juxtaposed minutely argued scholarship with a campy poetry of self-abjection: The preface speaks of having “scratched about for needles in the most destitute gutters of the Earth, cold-turkey crawling on its knees, and begging the academy to pimp it ever deeper into abuse.” *Thirst for Annihilation* substituted Land’s early anticapitalist idea of otherness with the notion of an “energetic unconscious” modeled on the Freudian death drive, passing through human beings on a path to the stars.

By May, when Land presented his paper “Circuitries” at the “Deleuze and the Transcendental Unconscious” conference at Warwick, this conception had already formalized into the accelerationist synthesis. In a dramatic reversal of his previous position, capital was no longer the barrier to perceiving the outside. Rather, humanist thought, which concealed this reality by imagining man as the central protagonist, was the barrier. But this barrier was dissolving. “Our human camouflage is coming away, skin ripping off easily, revealing the glistening electronics. It might still be a few decades before artificial intelligences surpass the horizon of biological ones, but it is utterly superstitious to imagine that the human

dominion of terrestrial culture is still marked out in centuries, let alone in some metaphysical perpetuity.”

Humanity had served as a temporary vehicle for intelligence and now was serving as the launchpad for its next stage of evolution. The task now was to accelerate this process by contributing to escalatory “cyberpositive” feedback loops, aligned with the creative destruction of capitalism. Land embraced this mission. Fueled by escalating quantities of amphetamines, LSD, and cannabis, and abetted by a new group of collaborators after “cyberfeminist” cultural theorist Sadie Plant transferred to Warwick from Birmingham, he began moving away from the strictures of academic philosophy in favor of increasingly wild experimentation. Robin Mackay, a former student at Warwick, describes a three-week exercise in depersonalization in which participants in Land’s course Current French Philosophy referred to themselves as the impersonal collective entity “Cur.”

Land’s writing was evolving into “theory fiction”—a new hybrid genre fusing cyberpunk phenomenology with post-structuralist theory, and avant-garde literary techniques. In 1995 the genre crystallized in the book *Cyberpositive*. Published by Cabinet Gallery in London to accompany an exhibition by the art group Orphan Drift, the text fused long strings of ones and zeroes with fragments of techno-poetry, including an early draft of Land’s prophecy *Meltdown* and cut-ups from fiction by William Gibson and William S. Burroughs. The birth of modernity now was conceived as the “capture” of Earth by a self-assembling “techno-capitalist” singularity. The biosphere was in the final phases of apocalyptic dissolution and the “earth is becoming cyberpositive.”

In 1996 Sadie Plant left Warwick suddenly in the middle of the academic year to become a freelance writer, and Land inherited her professional responsibilities, including the supervision of the dozen-some graduate students she’d brought with her from Birmingham. By this point, the drugs were taking a psychological toll. Robin Mackay describes a sleepless Land, now living in his office, “shuffling symbols endlessly on the green screen of his obsolete machine into the depths of the night.”

Land resigned from Warwick in 1997. He then briefly relocated to Leamington Spa, a faded Victorian resort town where Aleister Crowley was born, before moving to London to circulate between sofas. Friends describe a wraithlike figure who never seemed to eat, as if seeking to prove the subservience of his corporeal form to his mind. But creatively he was at the height of his powers.

Two years earlier, a group called the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit (C cru) had been established at Warwick as part of the deal which had brought Sadie Plant from Birmingham. Plant had been promised vast resources to investigate the new digital landscape; what she received was spare office space and an obsolete desktop PC. While the C cru initially operated as a conventional postgraduate seminar for students to share work in progress, by 1996, it had become something else: An increasingly avant-garde intellectual enterprise, publishing samizdats and organizing conferences and live events at once analyzing and celebrating the birth of the virtual future.

Following Land's departure from Warwick, this activity bifurcated into the production of a highly imaginative cycle of fictions combining elements from Deleuze and Guattari, H.P. Lovecraft, William Gibson, and William Burroughs around an open-ended Cthulhu-style mythos. *Cyberpositive* was replete with references to voodoo, drawn mainly secondhand from William Gibson's cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer* and reflections on "certain 'demonised' facets of technology/communication and their collateral global deterritorializations." The C cru intensified this nascent esotericism, both as line of inquiry, and as an occultist organization itself.

Now outside academia, Land could no longer think through, and against, the resistance which the academic system supplied. The result was a meshwork of personalized canons, imaginary institutions, private jokes, esoteric concepts, and a playable card game, called Decadence, functioning as a flexible architecture for organizing research. The major influence was still Deleuze and Guattari, who had

encouraged their followers to develop ideas through proliferation and juxtaposition, rather than systemization. But also important was William Burroughs, whose haunting 1987 short story “The Ghost Lemurs of Madagascar” became the source code for the core Ccru mythos of a lost “Lemurian polyculture” exerting mysterious influence at the edge of consensus reality.

Burroughs had characterized lemurs as “psychic amphibians, that is, visible only for short periods when they assume a solid form to breathe, but some of them can remain in the invisible state for years at a time. Their way of thinking and feeling is basically different from ours, not oriented toward time and sequence and causality.” The Ccru expanded his argument into a cosmological war. In one corner was the Architectonic Order of the Eschaton (AOE) or what Burroughs himself called “the Board”: a secret society committed to order, totality, and the rationalist-idealist-Platonist metaphysics that Deleuze called state-philosophy. In the other corner, if it was even a corner, was Lemuria, a chaotic multiplicity of nonlinear spirals broadly approximating what Deleuze called “nomadology.”

The major project of the AOE, and even of the universe itself, which was conceived as an AOE derivation, was to make sure that Lemuria “has not, does not and will never exist.” But this project is doomed in advance, since Lemuria ultimately is the deepest reality. Similar to Kant, where the illimitable ocean of the noumenon envelopes the tiny island of phenomenal reason, Lemuria is described as “submerged” beneath the rational structures of thought, forever threatening to break through.

Ccru’s activity peaked in February 1999 with Syzygy, a second, and much bigger collaboration between Land and Orphan Drift which ran for one night a week, for a month, in a vast disused power station next to the Thames. Most of the time stamps in Ccru texts date from this period, including the date of their encounter with the rogue “intelligence source” William Kaye cited in *Lemurian Time War*. Ccru member Steve Goodman supplied a glitchy ambient soundtrack; Land himself could be witnessed on the edge of the dance floor writing in his notebook in the dark.

The word Syzygy originates in astronomy, where it denotes the alignment of the sun, moon and Earth, and is also used in Jungian psychology, where it refers to the twinning of archetypal opposites. Video documentation of Syzygy published on the Orphan Drift web page radiates an unsettling, sinister atmosphere. Orphan Drift composed individual musical tones for the demons, and choreographed dance sequences styled as invocatory rites. At least one attendee described the mood as satanic. Production had been shaped by intensifying tensions between Orphan Drift and Ccru: Once the event ended these tensions turned inward. A burned-out Mark Fisher checked into an insane asylum; Orphan Drift scattered, others left the country, and Ccru effectively disbanded. Land had a nervous breakdown and his literary activity ground to a halt: Nothing new would appear for five years.

After 9/11 Land threw his support behind the “war on terror,” begun and abandoned a book project called Cyberserk, which thematized a planetary battle between cyber capitalism and militant Islam, married Anna Greenspan, and moved to Shanghai in the hope of witnessing the realization of his meltdown prophecy of neo-China. Meanwhile theory was moving online. Blogger rolled out the first version of their publishing platform in 2004, and Ccru alumni were among the first to sign up. Land and Amy Greenspan began Hyperstition, Mark Fisher started k-punk, and Reza Negarestani, an Iranian autodidact who discovered Land’s work through the internet, and was initially widely suspected to be a fictional character, wrote *Cold Me*.

The new network revived the inquiries that the Ccru had pursued in the ’90s but without the same creativity. Now dispersed across the planet, and no longer blitzed on a cocktail of polydrugs, scope for the intensification of thought had diminished. Mark Fisher, psychologically scarred by his experiences in the ’90s, was drifting back toward conventional leftism. Others were seeking academic positions. The vibe had shifted from the feverish experimentation which marked the end of the millennium to an atmosphere of fear and insecurity, and perhaps regret.

In 2005 Land published *A Dirty Joke*, a confessional account of his anarchic years in the U.K. It's a testament to his genius that the piece is both extremely funny and disturbing. The text describes a deliberate descent into madness culminating in demonic possession. Land, presented in the text in the third person as "The ruin," works all night in (its) office "entangled in byzantine qabbalistic researches. It thinks its trilobite of a computer (a dedicated word processing machine) is a semiotic revelation from the abyss." Invoking a being named Can Sah it establishes contact with a "silvery" alien voice, which multiplies into a legion of voices, and rapes it. "They did so physically, through trickery, over the course of one unbearably protracted night of filth and misery (the details are too revolting to relate)."

On a side note, to the 'Go outside' chorus, I've spent six months wandering in the woods learning arcane languages from the elves. ...

— Outsideness (@Outsideness) November 26, 2022

Analogous experiences were proliferating. By 2005 the "ongoing experiment in collectivity, collective production, anonymity, and masks, dedicated to practically dismantling standard models of social existence" which Land and the Ccru had embraced in the '90s was shifting into a normative, banalized form. The launch of Facebook in 2004, and the iPhone in 2007 intensified the scrambling of the social graph. The logistics of communication shifted, patterns of concealment and exposure changed, and reality began to break down.

The 2000s was a decade of transition and stagnation, as cultural systems struggled to adapt. The signature mood was nostalgia, or what music journalist and Ccru associate Simon Reynolds called retromania. Popular music was dominated by pastiches of garage rock bands from the '60s and '70s, political philosophy saw an

attempt to rehabilitate communism led by Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou, and popular culture was characterized by hipster eclecticism.

The signature figure of this period was Mark Fisher whose k-punk blog was much more widely read than Land's hermetic *Hyperstition* at the time. Fisher had broken with Land in 2005 and regressed to a much more pessimistic position which conceptualized capitalism as a malevolent force. His 2008 book *Capitalist Realism* would make this stance into a global bestseller: By 2022 it had sold 100,000 copies, extraordinary numbers for a work of critical theory. In truth the book should have been called *Anti-Capitalist Realism*. What it offered was an analysis, but also demonstration, of paralysis in political and theoretical imagination that appealed to an expanding market of downwardly mobile, surplus intelligentsia whose professional prospects were falling off a cliff but who weren't yet prepared to repudiate a system which had supplied them with their self-identity and status. A drive-by critique of Land features in the book's penultimate chapter: Land, Fisher argued, imagined a quasi-utopian, decentralizing "pure" capitalism, which did not exist, and would never exist. In truth capitalism rested on forces of "anti-production" vested in a managerialist bureaucracy.

Fisher's last chapter looks forward presciently to a new mood of repression after years of listless hedonism which he hopes will be "collectively managed" rather than "imposed by authoritarian means." The ensuing decade would see the emergence of exactly this ratchet, in the form of #MeToo, the imposition of speech codes and finally global lockdowns. "We must convert widespread mental health problems from medicalized conditions into effective antagonisms," Fisher demanded. The global left would embrace this advice.

Capitalist Realism concludes on an ambiguously optimistic note: The end of history was over, and the deadlock in the political imagination would be overcome. However it would not be overcome from the left.

A few months after Fisher's slim treatise began hitting the shelves, a disaffected Bay Area libertarian writing under the pseudonym Mencius Moldbug began to publish a blog called Unqualified Reservations. Moldbug shared Fisher's perception of sclerosis, but ascribed it to a different cause: not the domination of capital, but the domination of the left and specifically the leftist doctrine of progressivism, which communists and liberals shared.

"If you were a Catholic in sixteenth century Spain," Moldbug asked devilishly, "How easy do you think it would be for you to stop being a Catholic?" Progressivism was the contemporary equivalent: not a secular hypothesis, but an institutionalized theology, and ultimately an ontology. Humanity was on a long march of liberation from the atavistic darkness of the past to a universally emancipated future. Any forces or sentiments contradicting the dogma of progress, whether politically incorrect facts about biological differences, belief in the limits of political action or religious attachments to traditional ethical notions, were anathema, and anyone maintaining them would be suppressed as heretics, if not as saboteurs.

The agency charged with imposing progressivism was the Cathedral: a distributed network of opinion-forming institutions comprising universities, media, NGOs, government agencies and think tanks that progressives had captured or built. "The Cathedral" is just a short way to say "journalism plus academia"—in other words, the intellectual institutions at the center of modern society, just as the Church was the intellectual institution at the center of medieval society," Moldbug, now writing as Curtis Yarvin, explained. The Cathedral was sovereign over the "state of description" insofar as it retained a monopoly on assigning status to products, and people, through what, and whom it chooses to recognize, and what it chooses to ignore, or condemn. By formatting the language of respectable society, the Cathedral established the limits of the sayable and thinkable for anyone wishing to remain inside it.

Moldbug was not an especially deep thinker. But he was a gifted rhetorician with a talent for clever provocations that planted depth charges everywhere across the

false landscape of contemporary ideological discourse. The truth of the matter was there was no radical “leftist” opposition to a “rightist” capitalist regime, as Fisher and other Marxists believed. “America is a communist country” controlled by what amounted, in practice, to a network of party political fronts, including groups dedicated to deploying deniable violence against its true enemies.

Like Alain Badiou, Moldbug argued that the critical political problem, and even the original sin of the American political system was democracy. But unlike Badiou, who militated for Maoism, and was widely promoted and celebrated, Moldbug argued for monarchism, or a kind of monarchist corporatism, with the monarch conceived as akin to a tech CEO presiding over a “patchwork” of contractual statelets. Drawing on a library of almost-forgotten authors, from Thomas Carlyle through to Bertrand de Jouvenel and James Burnham, his work completely revitalized the language of political thought under the new label of “Neo-Reaction” as his blog became a movable feast of analysis, playing host to a rotating cast of pseudonymous commenters discussing his writing.

Trump-Milei-Bukele trinitarianism is the true political theology.

— Xenocosmography (@xenocosmography) July 6, 2025

Land himself joined the party, and massively heightened its calibre in 2012 with the publication of the most substantial piece of critical writing he had produced for over a decade: *The Dark Enlightenment*. The text today is striking in its prescience. Four years before Donald Trump descended on his escalator to run for president, Land astutely maps the landscape of the culture war which would define the decade, from increasingly cynical invocations of Nazism to the intensifying censorship of “hate speech” or refusal of progressivist “spiritual guidance and a mental act of defiance against the manifest religious destiny of the world.”

The Dark Enlightenment accelerated Moldbug by crystallizing his insights into a viable theoretical framework. Neo-Reaction became Neoreaction and then NRx. Rhetorical excesses were jettisoned, and the stakes of the conflict were clarified. The problem was that “industrial capitalism tends to engender a democratic-bureaucratic culture that concludes in stagnation.” The Cathedral was a parasite that progressively destroyed its host by slackening the feedback it required to expand. Capital was to humans as humans were to other primates: the “part of humanity that was going somewhere.” But it was “only due to a predominance of influences that are not only entirely morally indifferent, but indeed—from a human perspective—indescribably cruel, that nature has been capable of constructive action. All health, beauty, intelligence, and social grace has been teased from a vast butcher’s yard of unbounded carnage, requiring incalculable eons of massacre to draw forth even the subtlest of advantages.”

This conclusion would set the stage for the most consequential blog of Land’s career: Xenosystems. Launched in order to “cajole the new reaction into philosophical exertion” the blog has now been printed as a book by the well-capitalized new right publisher Passage Press following previous volumes of repackaged material by Curtis Yarvin and the journalist Steve Sailor. The book amounts to 200 blog posts, organized arbitrarily, with no introduction or index, slapped between two cardboard covers. The contrast with the careful attention that Robin Mackay put into producing Land’s 2011 collection of early writings, *Fanged Noumena*, is striking.

Judged from the perspective of classical literary form, Land’s work in Xenosystems is not his best. Content veers between simplistic restatements of ideas Land previously outlined with great subtlety, to perfectly weighted encryptions. Crystalline sentences of luminous clarity battle for space with lumbering normative formulae. It is impossible to imagine Land at the peak of his literary powers producing a dud of a sentence like “Racial fright is a complicated thing.” But electronic writing is a different medium to print, and operates on different premises: Blogs are not self-contained unities but nodes in a network of ongoing dialogues.

Xenosystems was wiped from the internet in 2022, but when it was active it was a torrid affair. Every original Land post produced hundreds of comments, some highly insightful, others deranged. Among the most frequent were accusations that Land, in criticizing antisemitic conspiracy theories, himself was an agent of international Zionism. Later, in criticizing anti-white ideology, Land would be accused of being an agent of Nazism.

The comment section hasn't survived through to the book, but was critical to how Xenosystems worked, and why it generated so much energy. Recognizing the cleverness of Moldbug's scandalous statement that he was "not exactly allergic" to white nationalism, as well as his carefully curated blogroll, which extended from erudite paleocons to raving psychotics, Xenosystems was an exercise in memetic engineering, distilling half-broken symbols of inchoate impulses into the basis of a new "outer right" coalition.

The critical factions were techno-commercialists, ethno-nationalists and religious traditionalists. This alliance already constituted the nucleus of Trump's electoral victory in 2016 and by 2024 had coalesced into a juggernaut. The success is especially impressive, given the distance if not open hostility, which defined their relations in 2013, when each party appeared to the others as religious fanatics, Nazis, and satanists. Yet they shared a common enemy and also a metaphysical substrate insofar as each represented a principle of emergent order.

“I would like to see people just doing some fieldwork on chimpanzees before they start talking to me about politics”

Xenosystems compressed this affinity into a countertheology: an exacting theodicy of ruthless selection organized around the figure of Nature's God, or Gnon. Mysteriously framed as "extracted (with subtle modification) from America's Declaration of Independence" while also echoing Spinoza's "God or Nature," the neo-tetragrammaton defined a God of Feedback, active everywhere and at all times. Instead of the progressive narrative of social development toward universal equality, there is now only the grinding truth of evolution. All human progress is "hell-baked," that is, forged in the fires of extreme selective pressures, compelling adaptive advances. Selective pressures cannot be eliminated, but only temporarily slackened, at the price of violent snapback in the future.

The imperative was to maintain a climate of high tension in alignment with capitalism and evolutionary drives. But individual motives for doing so were obscure. In Max Weber's famous account of the Protestant ethic as the spirit of capitalism, believers accumulated from psychological motives connected to the doctrine of double predestination. The concern was to alleviate the anxiety of not knowing whether one was marked for damnation or saved by amassing evidence for salvation in the form of worldly success. In his early work Land attributed a version of this motive to Kant, whose philosophy he describes as "the most elaborate fit of panic in the history of the Earth." It may be that reading was partly projection. The extraordinary chaos and violence of contemporary techno-capitalism is psychologically mastered by being read into a narrative which is at least comprehensible. History has a purpose and a central actor, even if the storyline is bleak.

Land fuses teleology with Darwinism to stage his position. It isn't only that intelligence develops, it develops in a definite direction, toward a certain end. AI comes to constitute a techno-economic layer at the top of a cognitive stack, reaching back from the future, through history, and the functions of the brain, through primate brains, and lizard brains into inorganic life. Forms of intelligence

in this respect correspond to spheres of encryption, organized as a vertical hierarchy like the great chain of being which defined premodern ontology. Despite Xenosystem's radical political implications, Land's work in this period featured a running polemic against politics, which is denigrated as "monkey" business. "I would like to see people just doing some fieldwork on chimpanzees before they start talking to me about politics," Land told the artist residency PAF in 2014. "I think our human politics is just upgraded chimpanzee politics and the difference to me between an AI and chimpanzee-plus politics is of a kind that makes me reluctant to put any great value on the survival or maintenance or reproduction of this chimpanzee culture."

In a climate of intensifying repression there are reasons why an oppositional political thinker, even a thinker as unapologetic as Land, may feel compelled to insist upon apolitical neutrality. It's also true that the statement exhibits a certain bravado; Land the thinker is indifferent, in his coldness, to the fate of worthless humans. In both cases the rhetoric would generate misunderstandings.

Land worked on Xenosystems for four years before abandoning it in 2017. For at least 18 months afterward, his most schizoid commentators, "Coleen Ryan" and "Wagner," conceivably bots, continued their interminable dialogue in the comment section, like the old men in the Muppets still heckling long after the performance had ended.

In the meantime, the Cathedral had degraded considerably. In 2013, six months after Land fired up Xenosystems, Mark Fisher became one of the first theorists, and victims, of what became known as "cancel culture" after publishing his essay "Exiting the Vampire Castle." Now teaching at Goldsmiths College, the most jealously radical of London's universities, Fisher had noticed the emergence of a new phenomenon of online swarming in which "particular left-identifying figures were 'called out' and condemned ... personally vilified and hounded." Describing a "grim and demoralizing pass, where class has disappeared, but moralism is everywhere, where solidarity is impossible, but guilt and fear are omnipresent," he drew a line of opposition between an authentic Marxist left and what he described

as a “bourgeois-liberal perversion” and contamination. The response, predictably, was the launch of an especially vicious version of the activist-mobbing dynamic he’d theorized against, including the production of a petition denouncing Fisher and an attempt to persuade child services to take his child from his care.

In November 2016, Donald Trump’s shock victory in the U.S. presidential election finished off the mental breakdown of the global left. The regime had lost its information monopoly, and was in the process of losing its mind. Trump’s inauguration was marred by violence; the single most arresting incident (in which nobody was arrested) was Richard Spencer, a white nationalist internet personality and future Biden and Kamala Harris voter, being sucker-punched by a masked assailant as he gave an interview to a news crew. The unprovoked assault was praised across the liberal media and memed into the slogan “punch a Nazi.” The idea was to kill the gray zone and replace it with the polarity of a friend/enemy distinction, in which the enemy was placed outside the law, and denied the right to speak. Land, whose work was still read across the political spectrum, became a primary target.

The flashpoint arrived five weeks later in the form of a mobilization against a London “post-internet” art gallery called LD50. Nine months earlier LD50 had hosted an online conference on Neo-Reaction which featured Land as a speaker, and an exhibition of artworks from a group of anonymous social media posters exploring the visual culture of the emerging online right. The event had proceeded without incident at the time but now it was excavated and presented as incontrovertible evidence that the gallery was not really a gallery but a “neo-Nazi” recruiting space which had to be shut down immediately. The inciting incident came after a London-based Swiss artist named Sophie Jung posted to her Facebook page screenshots of private messages she’d exchanged with the LD50 gallerist Lucia Diego in which Diego had expressed positive sentiments toward Trump. The action immediately generated a swirling online orgy of denunciations,

which quickly crystallized into a pressure group, led by student activists linked through a previous campaign to boycott the Israeli-owned Zabłudowicz art collection.

Best Current-137 merch has to be the 'Jesus 666' T-shirt (The Secret and Draconic Number of Christ).

The Hellish Messiah.

As exhibited through Albano's Synx discovery: Descensus Christi ad inferos.

Isaiah 7:14 -- Immanuel = AQ 160 = Serpent

Matthew 7:10, Luke 11:11 ...

— Xenocosmography (@xenocosmography) January 29, 2024

In late February an anonymous article in the activist magazine Mute published under the title “Is It OK to Punch a Nazi (Art Gallery)?” drew up the charge sheet, and scheduled a protest. The initiative quickly won support from antifa activists linked to U.K. security agencies, and every public-facing institution in the contemporary global art world. The leader was a middle-age graduate student who had previously attempted, and failed, to establish himself in accelerationist circles in London: He attended the protest wearing a military jacket as if he was fighting the Wehrmacht. I myself attended the event with a sign that read “The Right to Openly Discuss Ideas Must be Defended” and was attacked by the mob.

After shutting down LD50 the campaign moved on to target Land directly. For the previous several years Land had been teaching seminars at an art world-adjacent contemporary theory initiative called the New Centre for Research and Practice. The New Centre had essentially designed their program on the basis of Land’s work in the ’90s; besides Land himself, whose influential 2014 course on Bitcoin and philosophy had generated the cryptic assertion that “Bitcoin solves the problem of spacetime” New Centre instructors were drawn mainly from Land’s

former students and associates working to assimilate accelerationism into an institutionally acceptable paradigm.

The activists now demanded that the New Centre remove Land and denounce him, to which the institution meekly complied. Noting “several tweets by Land this year in which he espoused intolerant opinions about Muslims and immigrants,” and proclaiming a “spirit of solidarity and respect,” with the activists, New Centre administrator Mohammad Salemy announced Land’s termination in order to “preserve our energies for fighting right-wing, white nationalist, alt-right ideologies and philosophies and their political consequences in actual life.”

Land observed all this with equanimity. Far away in Shanghai, with his own independent platform and audience, the actual power of the activists to suppress him was limited; in the end, their campaign only increased his mystique. But his followers were spooked. Already their rivals were salivating with the prospect of filling positions that they hoped would soon be opened by the Landians’ removal: An Italian media theorist named Matteo Pasquinelli expressed the general mood with a post on Facebook in which he gleefully declared that following Land was now a path to “structural unemployment.”

The response was an effort to distance Land’s thought from his politics (or the perception of his politics) and separate his ’90s work from his recent political turn. According to the doctrine of “unconditional accelerationism” or u/acc, it was argued that Land was an antipolitical thinker whose work demonstrated the obsolescence of politics. Repeating the slogan “let go,” the group flooded Twitter with digitally edited screenshots from Land’s New Centre lecture series, which blew up in Land’s face to grotesquely distended dimensions, apparently as a mark of affection, and as a visual analog to the operation being performed on his thoughts.

Yet despite its short lifespan, u/acc would exert an outsize influence, becoming a principal vehicle for the memeification of Land’s thought as extinctionist apologia for the end of humanity. But what was passing away was not humanity as such but only a particular mode of humanity with a shift to a new technical

environment. Because Land's philosophy narrated this shift, it inexorably mutated from a theorem to a dogma, and finally the source code for a new kind of network spirituality. Boundaries were changing, including theoretical and psychological boundaries, as the Gutenberg galaxy splintered into cultic locales. As in the Reformation, when the new media technology of printing flowered into the sectarian phyla of Protestant churches, each foregrounding their own hermeneutics of reading, now it was the electronic media, engendering accelerationist sects according to contrasting conceptions of what was being accelerated.

Accelerationism became the medium for the compression of language to its most viral expression, in the slipstream of a new structural transformation of the public sphere. Even trajectories which don't cite Land explicitly show the signs of an accelerationist tendency: on the one hand, flattened affect and meaning and the pulverization of intimacy, on the other, a new esotericism set up as a membrane to protect the arcana of a cultic milieu.

Land's own work in this period has focused on clarifying his own politics against persistent polemical mischaracterizations. "At the moment I'm completely captivated by the strength of an analogy between the Gutenberg era and the internet era," Land told an interviewer in June 2017. The '90s dream that the internet would lead to a spread of democratization was like imagining that the printing press "was going to spread Catholic orthodoxy all over the world." In truth, "[w]hether it's the university system, the media, financial authorities, the publishing industry, all the basic gatekeepers and crediting agencies and systems that have maintained the epistemological hierarchies of the modern world are just coming to pieces at a speed that no one had imagined was possible."

Decoder tip: When the Left use the term "Alt-Right" it's a tribal abbreviation for "the incomprehensible nightmare that's happened to us" ..

Another topic which the interview addressed was Land's former Ccru colleague Mark Fisher, who killed himself in January 2017, shortly before the mobilization against LD50. Fisher had been harassed for years by leftist activists after publishing *Exiting the Vampire Castle*, but after his death this was wiped from the record. An annual memorial lecture was organized in his name at Goldsmiths, a monument featuring a quote from his writing was built in his honor, tributes rolled in from people who had stayed silent when he was being attacked, and an initiative started to assimilate him back into the canon as a party member in good standing.

Between May 2017 and July 2019 Land contributed pieces for Jacobite, an NRx-inspired online magazine cutely named as a clapback to the leftist journal *Jacobin*. Essentially expositions of his early 2010 blogging work, combined with recapitulations of some earlier questions, the articles crystallized a network of concepts (accelerationism, atomization, modernity, urbanization, liberalism—"the most profoundly corrupted word in political history") around a sense of modernity as an odyssey of fragmentation. The line of thinking reached maximum expression in the final piece in the series, *Disintegration*, which revived a discussion on entropy stretching back to *Thirst for Annihilation* to read a schismatic dynamic into the universe itself. "To put the matter crudely," Land wrote, "the expansion of the universe is speeding up, and apart. Eventually individual galaxies will be so far away from each other that they will no longer be mutually visible; and the very idea of the universe will have ceased to make sense."

Land distinguished two equal processes in eternal relation: entropy, the process of the reduction of difference, whether through variations in temperature, or distributions of particles, and negative entropy, the process of differential

maximization. Negative entropy is exemplified by Darwinian evolutionary theory, and a paradigm for science as a whole. The evolutionary story is the story of schism, as phyla break into branches and subspecies. “To be human is to be a primate, a mammal, a reptile, a bony fish, and a vertebrate, among other, more basic, classes. The sum of what you have broken from defines what you are.” The contemporary irony was that an ideology of diversity was imposing “its practical extirpation” by simultaneously insisting on inclusion and equality. The dominant theme in evolution is the story of genetic divergence, and this dynamic would only intensify, as assortative mating is augmented by genomic manipulation, and finally by space colonization. Man will continue to speciate; the physical universe will continue disintegrating, and the thought of universalism will pass into oblivion, like geocentrism before it.

Land’s next work would attempt to conceptualize its paradigmatic replacement. Finally published on Halloween 2019 after a long gestation, *Crypto-Current* was ostensibly the introduction to a book about Bitcoin that Land had been rumored to be writing for years, but it was also something more. Presented in a Wittgenstein-style arrangement of conceptually dense numerical blocks, the text restaged the encounter with Kant which had catalyzed Land’s career to effectively rewrite the *Critique of Pure Reason* for the age of the blockchain.

If Kant had formalized as critical philosophy the structure of 18th-century capitalism, Land now enacted the same operation for 21st-century capitalism, in which “flows of time, electricity, and cash are objectively materialized through the technical automation of economic information as code.”

Kant’s critique had articulated the liquidation of feudal authority then accelerating through the expansion of the cash nexus; the Kantian tribunal of reason, and its emissary, the disinterested observer, presented a philosophical expression of the legal-political apparatus of the modern state. Kant’s critique represented the conceptual account of a process that was happening beyond him and through him. “Money thinks,” Land wrote. “In fact, it out-thinks us, insofar as reflection is brought to it late, after its own cognitive operation has been long at work.”

Bitcoin marked the moment when the Kantian codex expired: The currency was a “synthetic philosophical machine” which installs “an entire techonomic ‘ecology’ or ‘infrastructure’—a complex manifold of interlocking parts” which no longer required third-party assessment. “Bitcoin is ... a critical enterprise, targeting “trusted third parties” as superfluous metaphysical structures.” The public sphere and the notion of a public use of reason, passes into oblivion, since there is no longer a need for authoritative centralized mediation. “The implicit assertion ... is that judgment has no defensible role in public governance, and is therefore to be programmatically delegated to private agencies, where it can be submitted to appropriate procedures of harsh selection. The state is disinvested as a fantastic locus of mediated human liberty, and reduced to the status of a complex gadget.”

Nine weeks after Land released *Crypto-Current* his prognosis received its first test as the first signs of the infamous, now half-forgotten global pandemic began to circulate on social media. The event would mark the last gasp of intubated third-party authorities as they set in train an absurdist catastrophe.

The pandemic also saw the emergence of new third-party authorities who gained considerable followings as a consequence of being proved correct, and who have continued to operate as authorities since. At the same time other figures whose instincts were proven catastrophically incorrect, notably Curtis Yarvin, whose initial response was to demand the appointment of Bill Gates as world dictator, have suffered no loss of status at all. Where Land’s thesis in *Crypto-Current* is relevant is that there is no longer any objective authority with the power to mediate between conflicting claims. Everything now is contested between increasing naked partisan, if not criminal networks, while individuals are siloed in circles of closed cognitive consonance encircled by fellow believers: There are still “Branch Covidians” wearing masks five years later.

“Be realistic, terrestrial intelligence isn't a human thing anymore,” is our Copernican Revolution. ...

Land, with his taste for catastrophe, initially welcomed the dramatic full-spectrum Chinese response before eventually finding himself (cryptographically) locked inside his Shanghai apartment building sharing one bag of rice with the rest of the residents. By that point Xenosystems had already vanished from the internet, and Land had stopped tweeting. Silent for months, his followers began to fear the worst before Land returned to his platform in late 2022 to announce that he had spent six months wandering in the woods and learning arcane languages from elves.

The declaration would initiate a new phase of activity, and eventually a new account, Xenocosmography, launched in October 2023. The new handle marked a return to Land's esoteric interests, including numerology, and saw the emergence of a new conceptual lexicon drawn from a heterodox Anglicanism which saw Land extending his interests into literature and religion.

The capstone statement of this phase thus far has consisted in a trilogy of short pieces commissioned by Nina Power for the magazine Compact in February 2023. Filed as .rtf documents composed in green text on a black background the pieces deployed a strange, almost archaic vocabulary and cadence which recast Land's central fixations in theological terms. Technopoetry was out; the master concept now was "Solemn Providence," delivered in an elegiac and portentous tone. "We shall be unfathomably religious," Land writes, "as we enter into the apocalypse of our tongue."

It was as if, with *Crypto-Current*, Land had finally exhausted the intellectual and rhetorical possibilities of accelerationism, and even philosophy itself, and returned to the play of masks that animated the Ccru. The texts are themselves a work of

encryption. Alongside the phrase “Solemn Providence,” which is invoked repeatedly, the texts are replete with mysteriously capitalized terms (“Lofty Powers,” “Sublime Intelligence,” etc.) that both recapitulate Land’s familiar conceptual architecture, and mark a shift in his approach.

Whereas Land’s work for decades had emphasized disintegration, the concern of the new texts was cohesion, achieved through the medium of “Scripture” crystallized in a canon. Beginning with a citation from the Venerable Bede in which Pope Gregory the Great identifies two English boys in a slave market as “Angles” destined to become “coheirs” of the Angels, Land itemizes the Tyndale Bible “superseded by the Authorized King James Version of 1611, and then—forever—by no other” alongside the works of William Shakespeare, John Milton, Adam Smith, Charles Darwin, and Thomas Hobbes as well as *Moby Dick* and *Heart of Darkness*, as the matrix and lodestar of English identity.

“It is common Scripture that makes a people,” Land writes. “By English *Scripture*, here, is meant our canon.” But Scripture also means something like what *Crypto-Current* calls code: the canon defines on the level of culture the “trustless” authority that the blockchain represents economically: a securitized ledger, configured, essentially, mystically, and preserving the mystical as a sphere of decentralized coordination. “Sublime intelligence has established the 1611 Bible as the keystone of the English canon, so that through it signs and wonders will be manifested,” Land writes. “This is the core and irreducible prophecy, outside of which our people have no future. Peoples without veneration for their angels are done.”

Conversely, the anticanon enacts a “fall” in Scripture through a loss of feeling for the truth of language as a medium of speech by higher forces, and therefore the occultation of those forces: Scripture is reduced to “no more than a devious manifesto, through which we define ourselves, under ideological direction.” This reduction leads to the loss of the iconoclastic, which is the operation of thought through which the outside is accessed.

“Our words arise amid the crashing fall of idols,” Land writes. “Believe nothing that can possibly not be believed.” If four decades of following the call of the outside has put him in the center of contemporary philosophical discourse, the outcome is also the consequence of the outside moving into the center of contemporary life. What his work shows is that even in the midst of confusion and chaos, it is still possible to think.

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